HARAMBEE FLAME

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RAINING ON THEIR CHARADE

For whom are you going to vote? Shall it be Carter, Reagan, Anderson? Which of these fine, upstanding gentlemen shall be successful in wooing your support? To be sure, you will be wooed because each one of these candidates is well aware of the pivotal part the black vote played in the last presidential election. Carter particularly, expecting a close race, is banking on the probability that, no matter how disgruntled black folks might be with his presidency, it is quite unlikely that Reagan and the Republicans will receive any substantial black support at the polls. According to the most recent(at the time the editor is sitting on the mattress typing this) opinion surveys, Carter is trailing Reagan by seven percentage points. If he expects to win, he has to try and develop a strategy by which he can, besides attracting the support of Democrats generally, attract a high black voter turn-out. Isn't it delightful to feel needed?

It may be delightful to feel needed, but it should get to be a drag after awhile, being consistently and disdainfully used. And this is precisely what the nature of the relationship between black voters and the Democratic Party has been, one of use to the point of abuse. And shall we continue this fine tradition this election year? Of course we will, because we suffer under three basic illusions: that it is electoral politics(the two-party system) which runs the affairs of this country, that the political rhetoric directed toward us is something more than mere rhetoric, and that there is a meaningful difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. There is another factor--our failure thus far to

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H.A.C.O. MEMBERS LEARN MORE ABOUT SOUTHERN AFRIKA

At the August 18th. Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization meeting we were visited by Claudius Shoniwa and Metsekae Motobuli. These two Brothers, from Zimbabwe and Lesotho respectively, gave a brief introductory presentation dealing with the vital statistics of their countries and a historical look at the struggle against colonialism in the southern Afrikan region. Within a very few minutes Claudius and Metsekae were forced to digress from their speaking agenda in order to answer questions from the membership.

The questions covered many areas of interest, including: the past(initial colonial period) and present roles played by imported religions, Afrikan oral tradition, the obstacles to political and economic development in independent Afrikan states posed by the existence of South Africa(Azania), and other matters. Most of the members seemed genuinely interested in the program. A follow-up session is being planned for sometime in September.

RECOMMENDED PERIODICALS

THE BLACK SCHOLAR(P.O. Box 908; Sausalito, Calif.; 94965)

THE BLACK COLLEGIAN(1240 So. Broad St.; New Orleans, La.; 70125)

OBSIDIAN(English Dept.; Wayne State U.; Detroit, Mich.; 48202)

WESTERN JOURNAL OF BLACK STUDIES(Washington State U.; Pullman, Washington; 99164)

CHANGES(17300 Woodward; Detroit, Mich.; 48203)

understand the uses of marginal political power--which will be discussed later.

Let us, at this point, briefly examine our illusions. 1-Is it electoral politics which runs the affairs of this country? Our first inclination is to answer "yes" to this question because we know that the execution of domestic and foreign policy is based on laws and that laws are enacted by "duly elected" representatives in Congress. What we fail to consider, however, is that these members of the House and Senate, like the president, have to secure substantial financial backing in order to run the kinds of campaigns that result in victory and that these funds have to come from somewhere. When we know that we are talking about hundreds of thousands, sometimes, millions, of dollars for these campaigns, we should also know that they are not being paid for in the main by the dollars here and dollars there that black folks generally can barely afford to contribute. These monies primarily come from the business community(generally through their Political Action Committees) and from upper-middle-class and wealthy individuals who see particular candidates as representing their interests, economic and otherwise. Further, once these candidates are elected and take office, it is these same companies and individuals who, through lobbyists(How many poor people or poor people's organizations can afford lobbyists?), keep tabs on their office-holders to insure that they behave themselves. But more important than any of this is the fact that laws are only so good as is the level of support of them by the corporate(business) community, insofar as bread-and-butter issues are concerned. One example should suffice: American-based multinational corporations have taken on their multi-national character in order to increase their profit levels through exploitation of cheap labor in developing countries and through the tax abatements offered by these countries. In other words, because the life of the U.S. is dependent upon the existence of "private enterprise" its laws must be reflective of the interests of these enterprises, or we face economic black(?)mail(lay-offs, higher prices, etc.).

2-Are the campaign promises made to us of material value? We needn't spend much time on this question because we ought to know by now that politicians will generally say just about anything in order to get votes. Furthermore, it is most often true that the campaign promises are phrased in such generalities that the politicians who make them are enabled to take the same promises from place to place, leaving with each constituent group a different message. Secondly, when campaign promises are specific they are generally such that the politician knows when he makes them that he or she will not have the authority on his or her own to fulfill them.

3-Is there a meaningful difference between the Republican and Democratic parties? We tend to have a view of Republicans as "bad guys" and of the Democrats as "good"/liberal. And we have this view both because we have fallen for political rhetoric and because we have placed more value than warranted on the social programs instituted under Democratic administrations. As to the question of the value we have placed on these programs, we need only ask ourselves why, in the nearly forty years that the Democrats have been the dominant party, our situation in relation to society as a whole has not appreciably changed.

Finally, as the resurgence of conservatism has drawn the platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties closer together, the importance of the black vote as a margin of victory or defeat has become heightened. We are in a position

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to bargain with the Democratic party for more significant concessions than we have been able to get through our traditional non-strategy of voting Democratic simply because it is expected of us. We can only do such bargaining, however, if the Democratic party is convinced that a large majority of the black population will, in fact, stay away from the polls if it is unresponsive to our demands. For black voters to make this move is important, pending formulation of a third political party which represents our class and racial interests, because failure to do so will result in continued blatant abuse of us as a voting constituency.

The Editor

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. The FLAME welcomes articles, poe- .
. try, suggestions, etc. Please .
. send them c/o David L. Rice, edi- .
. tor; Harambee Afro-Cultural Org.; .
. P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, Neb.; .
. 68501. We are in need of contri- .
. butions of money also, which may .
. be sent to the organization dir- .
. ectly. .
. . . . . .

INTERESTING STUFF

-According to a recent National Urban League report: 70% of all unemployed blacks have never received unemployment benefits; 50% of all poor black households receive no welfare assistance; 45% of all eligible black households do not benefit from any of the other public assistance programs.....from the GUARDIAN

-In the decade from 1970-'79, the percentage of "middle-income" black families has dropped from 12 to 9%..... ....from CHANGES

-Though blacks make up but slightly more than ten % of the population of the U.S., from the years 1970-76 approximately 26% of the people arrested were black. In this same period, while 1,194 whites were killed by the police, 1,205 blacks were killed by the police....from POLICE CRIMES IN THE U.S.--Hinds

-"Among the goals of the 1980 National Black Political Convention are the following:
1-To offer a major statement on the state of the black nation both in terms of its internal developments and the relationship of the black nation to the U.S. in terms of the impact of public policies on the black nation.
2-To provide analysis of the political-economic order in the U.S. and to assess the impact of that order on the aspirations of the national black community.
3-To examine the critical issues confronting the national black community and to examine projects, programs, and institutions which should be initiated or supported by the national black community.
4-To examine the relationship of the national black community in America to Africa, the Carribean, and the Third World and to shape strategies to aid in the liberation of these regions.
5-To update the National Black Political Agenda and to identify political directions and program priorities for action in the 1980s.
6-To provide for the development of structures and instruments through which working political relationships can be established with other oppressed nationalities and progressive forces as a means of projecting the programmatic thrust developed within the Black Political Agenda.
7-To provide informational and skill development work sessions for Convention participants in issue analysis and political and community organization.
8-To adopt a statement of principles, structure, and implementation strategy for an independent black political party. CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

REFLECTIONS ON 'THE KILLING GROUND'

Recently there was an informative news documentary on television called "The Killing Ground" that proved to be one of the most illustrative reports displaying the ideology of Europeans and and their utter lack of concern for people...not any particular people but ALL people. It told of the chemical depositories all over America which disperse lethal chemicals to our water supplies, land(inclusive of crops and animals), air, and which have accounted for numerous human fatalities in some eastern and midwestern states.

There were interviews with leading spokespersons for companies such as Exxon, Hooker, Dow, and I.B.M. who, by implication of their remarks, admitted on national television that they were committing murder by their ruthless actions. Yes, these corporations are committing murder and their executives are not and will not spend even one night in jail.

Many of us who watched this documentary probably did not recognize the seriousness of the issues raised or feel a sense of urgency because we were too busy in our own personal worlds, too busy to realize that all of us are in the same danger as were those people in the communities spoken of in "The Killing Ground." Even though our situation in Nebraska may not be as serious as that of the people in the locales depicted in the program in question, at least not directly; we yet have no guarantee against danger because we have no control over the elements, which may bring clouds to drop upon us rain contaminated by chemical pollutants from any place in the world.

The barbarian Chancellor Williams(author of DESTRUCTION OF BLACK CIVILIZATION) spoke of is still with us today, as alive and active as he was when he began the rape and plunder of Afrika centuries ago. The spokesperson for Hooker Chemical Company made this fact very clear to my mind with the statement of his company's Dollar-vs.-Life philosophy. Inasmuch as American society demands more and more of the material illusions of luxury, these companies in turn feed these whims for a "better life," at the expense of life itself.

The message is clear to me that, if something isn't changed about our thinking in America, we BLACK MEN and BLACK WOMEN will be cooperating in our own extinction. Our mission and our enemy is right before our eyes. It is up to us, as black people, to rid ourselves of the anamorphosis which is common among us. We are held in jeopardy by those people who stole who we once were as Afrikans. And it is a responsibility that rests upon our shoulders to repossess ourselves and to protect this land and the life it supports from those who would destroy it and us.

If anything is to be done about the oppression we endure, mere rebellion will not suffice. We must conquer.

Jimmie Wayne

CHARLES PACE TO CONDUCT WORKSHOPS

Black actor Charles Pace will be conducting a six-week series of workshops on theatre here in the pen school beginning Monday, August 25th. He is being brought here by Centennial College. This Brother is an excellent performer and a conscious black man. You are urged to check him out.

. . . . . .
. In the prior issue of the FLAME you .
. (outside the penitentiary who are .
. receiving this publication) were .
. asked to return a form indicating .
. your desire to continue receiving .
. the FLAME. We are by no means a .
. wealthy organization and would thus .
. like to know that the expense we in- .
. cur in the printing and mailing of .
. our newsletter is not a waste. . . .
. . . . . .

**********LIFE RHYTHMS**********

FAILING BY FLESH

Even in the most Orphic season
it is always night in Boston,
the evenings cold
and the trees stripped carelessly
of themselves.
On Charles and Beacon streets
the wine-dark flood
of outcasts' voices....heavy
and cold beyond all shivering
seizes me and wraps my soul
around the Common,
and I am become a tractable nigger,
though the hues
of well-seasoned fears
deliver me from dope
and sex and violence,
and O ye broken Puritans I am pure,
which is to say...afraid.

II

In spite of my clumsy attempts
to challenge the scale,
the verdict will not change:
I have overpaid with grace and pain
for Charon's slow ride in the swans
and the meek sanity of summer
in another country.
As I have trespassed against myself,
I forgive me my sins that I did
not kiss lips.
and would not write poems about
the taste of wretchedness
in this alien land: my penance being
that I have forgotten more
than I could regret.

Ray Fleming
(Univ. of California)

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CERTAIN 'RESPONSIBLE' ELEMENTS

the polices
roll through the neighborhood
boxed up inside steel
on rubber wheels
scooting along the concrete like
the big cockroaches
cept the cockroaches bug you
you cast a shadow on the wooded floor
with the big size twelve
smash the cockroach all to hell
but how bigga feet what you gotta have
for the polices
what kinda boot smash steel
and what kinda the spokesman
speak the truth
be for real
when he suck at the microphone
and thrust his pasty face before
the lens
as if he could say anything
what you could comprehend
cuz how you understand
truth like death
entombed in lies so tight
you know not what he say is wrong
from what he say is right
and you wonder if it be
your own eyes what play the tricks
but it be him all the time
wrapping the truth in disguise
making these rough things sound so slick
so "significantly improved"
while on the streets
you take your licks just like before
and find your battered head
to be unsoothed
by the euphemizing of the truth
and so much else excused
by those who would hang their hats
on the racks of upward mobility
while feigning discontent on stage
while behind the curtain

bargaining with "the man" for
POSITION
with the chips of your pent-up rage.

David L. Rice

.....

9-To secure financial resources to serve as seed monies for the establishment of a national institute for community organization and development...."